

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2318

INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASUNCION 0679

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, PA

SUBJ: TODMAN SPEECH

1. THE SPEECH OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN TO THE CENTER FOR INTER-AMERICAN RELATIONS HAS HAD A GREAT IMPACT HERE. A MORNING HEADLINE READS "TODMAN SEVERELY CRITICIZES HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY OF CARTER."

2. THE GOVERNMENT IS JUBILANT. ACCORDING TO PRESIDENTIAL ADVISER PAPPALARDO, WHEN PRESIDENT STROESSNER READ THE PRESS ACCOUNT OF THE SPEECH HE SAID, "WE SURVIVED JOHN FOSTER DULLES TELLING US WE SHOULD KILL ALL OUR COMMUNISTS AND NOW WE CAN SURVIVE JIMMY CARTER TELLING US WE SHOULD LET THEM ALL GO FREE TO WALK THE STREETS." (NOTE: TO OUR KNOWLEDGE THERE ARE ONLY TWO COMMUNIST PARTY MEMBERS IMPRISONED IN PARAGUAY. THE OTHERS HAVE DANGEROUS DEMOCRATIC TENDENCIES.) ALL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WITH WHOM WE HAVE SPOKEN ARE UNANIMOUS IN THEIR PRAISE OF THE TODMAN SPEECH. THE COLORADO PARTY NEWSPAPER DEVOTES AN ENTIRE EDITORIAL ENTITLED "THE RADICALIZED IN DISGRACE" TO EXPLAINING HOW THE TODMAN POSITION JUSTIFIED THE STROESSNER GOVERNMENT'S POSITION ON HUMAN RIGHTS. PAPPALARDO GAVE US THE NAMES OF THOSE IN THE DEPARTMENT TO WHOM HE BELIEVED TODMAN WAS REFERRING.

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3. THOSE IN PARAGUAY WHO HAVE SUPPORTED OUR POSITION ON HUMAN RIGHTS HAVE EXPRESSED THEMSELVES IN THE STRONGEST TERMS. AN INTERNATIONALLY KNOWN SCIENTIST SAID THE SPEECH WAS A "TRAGIC EVENT." AN OPPOSITION LEADER WHO FACES A PRISON TERM ON A TRUMPED UP CHARGE CAME TO THE EMBASSY AND TOLD US THAT "IF THIS IS THE NEW POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES, THERE

IS NO HOPE." SEVERAL PEOPLE, INCLUDING A CATHOLIC BISHOP, ASKED US IF WE DID NOT UNDERSTAND THAT THIS SPEECH WOULD BE TAKEN IN ALL OF LATIN AMERICA AS PROOF THAT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT WAS DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF ON HUMAN RIGHTS.

4. COMMENT: IF THE DEPARTMENT HAS ANY GUIDANCE WHICH WOULD ASSIST ME IN LESSENING THE DISASTROUS EFFECTS OF THE INTERPRETATIONS BEING PLACED ON THIS SPEECH, I COULD MAKE INSTANT USE OF THEM.

WHITE

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